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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSEST

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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Quiet, Please

Excitement swept the Chamber of Deputies when, in 1839, announcement was made that Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, painter and physicist, would exhibit to the Deputies and the citizens of Paris a new photographic process upon which he had labored for years. The daguerreotype, said scientific gossip, would make obsolete the popular cameras lucida and obscura which, in reality, were not cameras at all, but only devices to assist draftsmen and artists to gain proper perspective. This new process, for which Daguerre was to receive the Legion of Honor, actually transferred and fixed a subject upon a copper plate.

Little wonder then that Deputies, artists, and scientists exclaimed when they examined in the little room off the Chamber the first results of the daguerrean process. They pointed excitedly to three views of Paris, they commented upon the minute detail shown in a picture of Daguerre's

atelier, and they looked in amazement at photographs of busts in the Louvre. They spoke of the "most incredible accuracy" which never before had been obtained by any painting or drawing technique. The Academy of Sciences formally approved the invention on August 2nd and almost immediately the French government published details, so that it soon became known throughout the world.

In November, 1839, the most distinguished scientific periodical in the United States, the *Journal of the Franklin Institute,* printed Daguerre's own detailed and practical description of the daguerreotype, "which consists in the spontaneous reproduction of the images of natural objects, in the Camera Obscura; not with their colours, but with great delicacy in the gradation of the tints." Within a decade, Americans with homemade equipment had established photographic salons in every large eastern city and were pushing westward to catch and make permanent the narrative of a restless nation on the march. They set up their unwieldy apparatus in the States of the Old Northwest; they crossed the Mississippi into Iowa; and they gambled with Lady Luck on the route to California and Oregon. Fiercely individualistic, these itinerant artists warred with one another in the best traditions of the frontier. In

the river towns of Iowa they were as canny as a New England peddler and twice as slick. Exploiting the novelty of photography, the fond devotion of newlyweds, the pride of parents in their children, and the curiosity of nearly everybody, the pioneer daguerreotypists did a flourishing business.

How many of these photographic merchants set up shop in the Hawkeye State is difficult to determine, for they drifted across the social scene as elusively as the fireflies flitted through the river bottoms. They came into a town, remained for a week or month — even longer if trade was good — and then moved on. Their advertisements would appear in local papers and then suddenly cease. In the autumn of 1848, for example, a daguerrean artist twice visited Burlington and apparently remained about a week each time. This Mr. Fanshaw opened a studio at the Barrett House where the *Hawk-Eye* said he produced excellent miniatures. Two years later P. Lounsberry advertised that he was producing daguerreotypes in a "life-like manner" in his parlor at the corner of Washington and Third streets. Lounsberry probably arrived in Burlington late in the fall of 1850 and remained until the spring or summer of 1851.

At that time C. N. West who had traveled

through the western States and had operated a studio in St. Louis for several years moved into Lounsberry's rooms. He built a new skylight — "one of the finest in the western country" — installed the most modern improvements in the art, including Galvanic apparatus, and announced that visitors might view, free of charge, a picture of Jenny Lind. West also said that he would remain but a limited time and urged everyone to call early. To attract customers, he gave a free public lecture on the history of the daguerrean art at the hall of the Sons of Temperance. But, despite the lure of Jenny Lind and his lecture, West was able to remain in Burlington only about two weeks.

Early in 1852 Lounsberry was back again to remain "for the present to give those bound for California and Oregon an opportunity to leave their shadows with the friends they leave behind them." The next year William Fields opened a gallery on Third Street over Swan's store and announced that no customer might take a picture home unless satisfied that it was both a perfect likeness and a work of art. To call the roll of all the traveling artists who tarried in Burlington and Iowa would be a dull exercise. They came and went with their cases of apparatus, their samples of frames, their cheap lockets, and their expensive breast pins. They coaxed mothers to bring wide-

eyed children to studios in Keokuk, Fairfield, Iowa City, and Davenport. They posed brides and grooms and they photographed corpses. Then, after a day's work was done, they tinkered with their cameras and experimented with Daguerre's process.

It was, indeed, no easy task to make daguerreotypes during the forties and fifties. The process was a complicated one divided into five meticulous operations: the polishing of a silver plate; coating the plate with iodide of silver by submitting it for about twenty minutes to the action of iodine vapor; projection of the image of the object upon the golden colored iodized surface; development of the latent image by means of the vapor of mercury; and, finally, the fixing of the picture by immersing the plate in a solution of what was then called sodium hyposulphite. Of course, refinements were made upon Daguerre's original method, but even so the making of a suitable miniature demanded hard work from the artist and much patience from his subject.

Alexander J. Wolcott, of New York City, reduced the size of the daguerrean camera, but it still measured about fifteen inches long, eight and a half inches high, and eight inches wide. The reflector measured seven inches of clear diameter and had a twelve-inch focus. Still later, after im-

provements made by Charles G. Page, Iowans might have their daguerreotypes done in color, although the artist was never able to determine in advance the exact shade which would result. No early refinements, however, were designed to lessen the time that an Iowa farmer or politician had to sit before exposure was completed. The slightest movement ruined both plate and artist's temper. The time necessary for perfect exposure ranged from seven to perhaps twenty minutes depending upon the light's intensity and the equipment being used. Metal rods with head clamps which locked at the back of the neck helped hold a sitter still.

Fields, in Burlington, kept a wide variety of head locks which he guaranteed could not be seen when "your likeness is neatly set in ring, pin, or locket." And O. L. Burdick told his Davenport customers that clear days were best for children as they would not have to sit so long, but he added that adults were taken equally well in any weather. A special skylight was built into Moses Shamp's studio in Fairfield in order to increase light and thus decrease the time necessary for the subject to remain motionless.

Again and again artists working in Iowa called attention in prose and verse to the fact that daguerreotypes were unexcelled because they were

taken by the sun itself. A. L. Swallow regularly ran the following lines in the Burlington *Daily Telegraph:*

> Daguerreotypes must be perfection,
> Since pictured by the sun's direction;
> Heaven's own bright rays — shed from above
> To enshrine the forms of those we love.

When L. W. Buell returned to Keokuk in March, 1853, from a trip to New York where he purchased a "large assortment of Paper Mache, Kossuth, Union, Jewel, Pearl, and other fancy cases," he installed a large skylight to do his work in a "style that will suit all."

This claim immediately incensed Buell's competitor, J. H. Emerson, who inaugurated an advertising campaign calculated to belittle his rival and prove his own superiority. For weeks the feud raged between Emerson's Great Western Gallery and Buell's studio. The battle centered about the respective merits of Buell's skylight and Emerson's side-light. The former, of course, was direct illumination in the best daguerrean tradition, while the latter was indirect lighting which was becoming increasingly popular throughout the nation.

Emerson fired the first heavy salvo in this war of the Keokuk daguerreans in the local paper, *The Morning Glory*. As a poet Emerson probably

was a superior photographer, but the verses are intriguing, not for their literary characteristics, but for the insight they throw upon the social scene, and because they are typical of many others which appeared in the press of the State.

Ladies and gents, my verse indite,
  And brush your flowing curls,
With face so sweet and dress so neat,
  Into my corner peep.

Give me a call, and I will please
  You all, at No. 3 (Third Street)
For it's the place to get your face
  Set in a fine gold case.

There you will find a side-light, too;
  The best that's in the city,
If you don't believe it, come and try
  Our side-light by sitting.

I want you all to bear in mind,
  I'm just as low in price
As my friend——on——St.,
  But get them up more nice.

Buell promptly announced that he was reducing his prices for the next ninety days to a flat dollar and a half and added crisply: "Also we would say to our friend of the Great Western Daguerrean Gallery that we do not exhibit other Artists' pictures and call them better than our neighbors. We only ask to have a fair trial and see if trans-

mitted is not better than reflected light." Emerson immediately cut his price for the next hundred days, thus charging the same fee as Buell but for ten days longer. He also pointed out the deficiencies of daguerreotyping with skylights. "If you do not wish to be humbugged with a skylight picture," he wrote, "call at No. 3 Third Street, where you can get one taken by a side-light. Shaded just to please the fancy, with a much richer tone than a skylight can produce. There is always a dark, heavy shade below the eyebrows, nose and chin, which cannot be avoided in a skylight picture, but with a side-light, the shades are blended in with the light parts, so as not to show where they join, showing a life-like appearance, which cannot be produced with a skylight."

Buell resented these criticisms and replied: "If you wish a finely-shaded, deep-toned, life-like and natural Miniature, which will not fade, call at Buell's Skylight Daguerrean Gallery, where you can secure a correct likeness, instead of one on which one side of the face is Black, and the other white, or giving no expression at all — which is the case with side-light pictures."

By this time Keokuk citizens must have been fascinated and amused by the photographic conflict in their midst. They watched the controversy to its conclusion. Through the months of 1853,

1854, and 1855 Buell and Emerson kept hammering at one another. By June of the latter year, however, Emerson seemed forced to acknowledge defeat. His advertisements in *The Morning Glory* became fewer and then ceased. Buell, on the other hand, was announcing that he was doing work for residents of Iowa, Missouri, and Illinois; that he was carrying a large stock of daguerrean supplies for artists; and that he was furnishing to the trade the improved apparatus of Harrison, Palmer, and Chapman.

In Iowa City, two daguerrean artists were producing the "most terrific facsimiles of the human visage." On February 1, 1854, Thomas Blanchard, Jr., announced that his rooms in Hemsworth's new building and over Krouse's clothing store were fully equipped and that he was ready to take likenesses varying from the sixteenth size to half-case size. In October, James Hartsock, "Professor of the Daguerrean Art," advertised that he was prepared to furnish miniatures of every size and urged residents to "secure the shadow ere the substance fade." Prices ranged from the cheaper pictures at about a dollar and a half to the more expensive miniatures set in elaborate cases which were sold for as high as twenty dollars. Miniatures of the sick or deceased usually were more costly, not only because of the urgency of the

situation, but also because the artist had to carry his cumbersome equipment from studio to home.

By the time of the Civil War the daguerrean artist no longer was enjoying the popularity and prosperity of earlier years. Improvement in method and new inventions gradually were transforming the old artist who followed Daguerre into a professional photographer with simplified plate and camera. The dry plate and the alkaline developer were in use in the early years of the 1870's and the rapid gelatin emulsion process became known during the next decade. The boon was great. In 1840, for example, an Iowan sat for as many as twenty minutes for a daguerreotype. Forty years later he was exposed in one-fifteenth of a second.

PHILIP D. JORDAN

Air Mail in the Twenties

"The first United States mail ever carried from Chicago to Omaha by air route", it was reported, passed through Iowa City on January 8, 1920. This initial flight carried no regular mail for Iowa nor was any Iowa mail taken on board. At Iowa City, however, when the plane stopped en route, Pilot Walter Smith carried a letter which he personally delivered to Robert N. Carson on the airplane field. Presumably this was the first airmail letter ever delivered in Iowa.

As a part of the publicity campaign for the inauguration of a new day in air transportation, Mr. Carson had planned to send a small Iowa pig to Chicago with Pilot Smith upon his return from Omaha. Accordingly at 1:33 o'clock on the morning of January 9th, Smith, piloting plane No. 104, left Iowa City with a live pig consigned to John Burke, manager of the Congress Hotel in Chicago. It was originally planned to send the pig on the previous day and so before the consignment arrived the consignee was reported to be "getting impatient". A message from E. E. Peake, manager of an automobile exhibit being held in Chicago, addressed to "R. N. Carson, Chief

Good Roads Booster, Iowa City," said: "Johnny Burke is standing out on Lake front watching for airplane pig. Hurry up or it will be a hog. No one here believes your story."

The Carson pig created considerable comment in Iowa City, and perhaps it created not a little merriment when, decorated with blue ribbons, it was led across the lobby at the Congress Hotel. But in reality regularly scheduled shipments of mail or products by air were left for the future.

Thirteen months later, on February 21, 1921, the United States Post Office Department conducted a series of experimental flights in anticipation of the establishment of regular coast to coast mail service, involving night-time flying.

A message from Hazelhurst, New York, on February 24th reveals something of the results. "Eight bags of mail dispatched from San Francisco by airplane at 4:30 Tuesday morning, arrived at Hazelhurst field yesterday at 4:50 p. m., establishing a cross-country mail record of 33 hours and 20 minutes, with allowance for time zones changes in the coast to coast flight."

To accomplish this difficult and dangerous feat, the Post Office Department had dispatched four airplanes on a transcontinental mission. Two planes had left Hazelhurst Field with mail addressed to San Francisco. At the same time two

planes had left San Francisco with mail for New York City. The mail was transferred from plane to plane in a relay flight. Pilots were changed from time to time, but only one of the relays succeeded in spanning the continent.

One of the west-bound planes was grounded at Debois, Pennsylvania. The other continued its journey as far as Chicago. One of the east-bound planes flew from San Francisco to Elko, Nevada, where the plane was wrecked and its pilot W. F. Lewis was killed. The east-bound plane which was successful in reaching New York was piloted on the last leg of the journey by E. M. Allison. Allison had left the New York field on the west-bound plane which arrived at Chicago. He had piloted as far as Cleveland, Ohio, and had remained there to take over the east-bound plane which was piloted from Chicago to Cleveland by Jack Webster. Other pilots who participated in this successful relay were Farr Nutter, who started the flight at San Fransisco and carried the mail to Reno, Nevada. There the relay was taken up by Easton who piloted the ship to Salt Lake City, Utah. The distance from Salt Lake to Cheyenne, Wyoming, was traversed by Pilot Jimmie Murray. Pilot Yager flew the plane from Cheyenne to North Platte, Nebraska. From there to Chicago, the mail plane was flown,

chiefly during the hours of darkness, by Jack Knight, one of the best aviators of his day.

On February 23, 1921, the Iowa City *Press-Citizen* carried a story of the flight, and of the landing at Iowa City — the only stop that was made in Iowa. "A splendid flight through darkness; with a perfect landing on a strange field — after a journey of countless miles over a tract he had never beheld before, by day or night — that is the admirable record of Lieut. Jack Knight, a transcontinental flyer in Uncle Sam's air mail service, who reached here this morning, at 4:45 o'clock — only 20 minutes behind a schedule that covered the extraordinary aerial voyage", began the account.

"For many miles, Lieut. Knight fought adverse conditions", the reporter continued. From North Platte to Omaha "clear weather favored him", but after he left there two hours after midnight, "gloomy and forbidding" clouds covered the sky all the way to Des Moines. "Thus, through Stygian gloom, he pursued his way, fought bravely on."

After passing the capital city, "he was a bit more fortunate for a time, as the murky atmosphere cleared, and, at an altitude of 1000 feet, he flew Iowa Cityward." Near Williamsburg, "he met the forces of nature that made for renewed

danger — snow and fog, and banks of depressing clouds, through which he was compelled to fight his way, blindly, determinedly, desperately. This was about 4:15. Temporarily, the fog and snow, hostile and perilous, almost induced him to attempt a landing at some spot — but he would not descend".

Presently he was in the vicinity of Coralville, but "could not locate the aviation field far to the south. He flew around in the gloomy heights for about 15 minutes, and finally succeeded in locating the Iowa City field, where Chief H. S. Long awaited his coming. The lights on the local field helped him, of course, after he reached a point within the scope of his vision on high. Espying the gleaming beacons 1000 feet or so down, he then descended, and made a perfect landing."

"It was a wonderful feat", declared Chief Long, of the Iowa City station. "Many a time a pilot, new to the territory over which he is flying, and whereon he desires to descend, finds it difficult, even in the daytime, to locate a strange field. This has been true right here.

"With Jack Knight coming to a perfectly strange city and field; and at night; and under adverse conditions, too, what he accomplished is about as fine a piece of work in the air as I ever saw."

On the following day the New York *Times* quoted Knight as saying in Chicago that he was "feeling fine" except that he needed something to eat and some sleep. "I got tangled up in the fog and snow a little bit," he said. "Once or twice I had to go down and mow some trees to find out where I was, but it did not amount to much, except for all that stretch between Des Moines and Iowa City. Say if you ever want to worry your head, just try to find Iowa City on a dark night with a good snow and fog hanging around. Finding Chicago — why, that was a cinch, I could see it a hundred miles away by the smoke. But Iowa City — well, that was tough."

Two more years passed while planning and experimentation in air-mail transportation continued. *Current Opinion* for September, 1923, said: "Brilliant illumination along a pathway 1,000 miles long will be one of the features of the cross continent air-mail service to be inaugurated by the Post Office Department shortly. A line of beacons will extend from Chicago to Cheyenne, covering one-third of the route from New York to San Francisco. Over this part of the course, mail carrying planes will travel at night. The schedule calls for departure from New York daily at noon, and arrival at Frisco toward evening of the following day — an elapsed time of only 28 hours."

Prior to this time there had been much planning and intermittent attempts to improve the service. But transcontinental air-mail transportation had not yet become a through service. Rather it was auxiliary to railway mail service. Early-morning mail planes would pick up mail bags in New York, carry them to Cleveland, and place them on the Chicago express train which left New York the night before. The new system was intended to "lift the air mail out of its auxiliary status and give it the standing of an independent service from coast to coast."

To perfect this plan and to facilitate night flying, powerful beacon lights were installed at each of the five regular flying fields — Chicago, Iowa City, Omaha, North Platte, and Cheyenne. Each was to have a 600,000,000 candlepower light, which would swing slowly around on top of a tower, where it would be visible for fifty miles. In addition to these terminal lights, less powerful lights were located at twenty-mile intervals to mark emergency landing fields. As a final safeguard flashing traffic lights directed upward were located every three miles along the line of flight.

In accordance with a well-laid plan of the Post Office Department a trial flight was made over this route on August 21, 1923. The plane which left San Francisco on this flight was delayed en

route. But an east-bound plane which left Cheyenne at 6:53 o'clock Tuesday evening without waiting for the San Francisco plane arrived at Hazelhurst Field at 5:04 Wednesday evening.

Only about fifty persons, among them J. E. Whitlock, Superintendent of the Eastern Division of the Air Mail, and W. E. Clecknen, detailed by Postmaster Morgan for the arrival, were at Hazelhurst Field when the Cheyenne plane landed. Word had been received that Pilot Eugene Johnson had left Cleveland at 2:02 Wednesday afternoon on the last lap of the eastward flight, which usually required three and a half hours. At 5 o'clock a plane appeared in the sky. Four minutes later it taxied up to the hangar, and the officials were surprised to see Johnson climb out. He had arrived fifty-nine minutes ahead of his schedule.

Johnson had averaged 140 miles an hour over the 435-mile air way between Cleveland and Hazelhurst Field, at one time attaining an altitude of 11,000 feet over Bellefonte, Ohio. With favoring weather and wind, he had just "opened up for all she's worth" in the last lap of the race. Mail which had arrived on the plane was hastened to the New York post office whence it was distributed yet that night.

One of the letters carried on this trip was dispatched by Robert N. Carson from Iowa City at

three A. M. to the editor of the New York *Times*. "Greetings, with the inauguration of the night flying of the Air Mail", it began. "The mail that left New York City Aug. 21, at 11 a. m., arrived here the same date at 8:50 p. m. and left for the West at 9 p. m. en route to Frisco. The ship arriving here was slightly ahead of schedule.

"Let us hope", the letter concluded, "that the flying of the Air Mail by night as well as by day is a permanent thing".

The westward flight which was made at this time was equally successful. Mail which left New York on Tuesday morning was delivered in San Francisco on Wednesday evening. This was the first mail ever carried westward by air the complete distance between these two cities. Jack Knight, ace flyer of 1921, was one of the pilots on this relay flight.

In 1938 Knight visited Iowa City and recalled those early flights. At that time he predicted that flying in the near future would be "in four-motor, 42 passenger planes, which will fly non-stop coast to coast." Trans-Atlantic plane service as well as trans-Pacific service, he said, would soon come.

Knight's prophecies have now been richly fulfilled. But Iowans should not forget those heroic days of small beginnings in the development of air mail transportation in the decade of the twenties.

J. A. SWISHER

The Lost Creek Disaster

In the heyday of coal mining in Iowa, from about 1890 to 1920, thousands of men were employed in and around the commercial mines operated in the State. Early in the new century, production had reached five and a half million tons a year. More than twice as many mines were operated in Appanoose than in any other county, but Monroe with only sixteen mines in 1902 led in production with over a million and a quarter tons. Polk County produced nearly a million tons that year and Mahaska, which had formerly been the banner coal-producing county in the State, was third with nearly 725,000 tons. New mines were continually being opened and others abandoned. Fortunes were made and lost, but during this period of expansion the industry brought prosperity to the Iowa coal fields.

In the deep mines, where the coal was from two to seven feet thick, the room and pillar system of working was generally used. The coal was blasted loose with charges of powder or dynamite, loaded on cars, and hoisted up the shaft to the surface. Fresh air was supplied by air shafts and ventilating fans. Power-operated machinery

was equipped with safety devices to prevent accidents, but some operations were naturally dangerous. Men were frequently killed by explosions and falling coal or slate. Mine inspectors continually urged greater care in shot firing and timbering.

One of the worst mine disasters in Iowa occurred at noon on Friday, January 24, 1902, a bitterly cold day, in the Lost Creek mine located about ten miles southeast of Oskaloosa. As was the custom at midday, Andrew Pash, who was working in room ten about five hundred feet from the shaft on the east side, prepared two shots to break out the coal for the afternoon's work. One new hole was drilled but the other shot was put in a hole from which the tamping had been blown when it was fired the night before. Later examination showed that this hole was "five feet deep, four feet, ten inches on the point, slim heel, coal three feet, eleven inches high below the black jack," and close to part of an old hole drilled at a right angle and penetrating to about seven inches of the one recharged on the fatal day.

After the sixty-seven men in the pit had gone to places of safety to eat their lunch, the fuses were lighted and the shots were fired. But in room ten, instead of the usual explosive effect, flame shot out along the roof. These "windy

shots" which blew out the tamping instead of shattering the coal were not uncommon, but the condition of the atmosphere in the mine that day was unusual. The air was laden with a fine carbon dust. The flame from the shot ignited the dust and caused a terrific explosion. A solid wall of fire swept through the mine carrying everything before it and leaving a trail of death and destruction in its wake.

The force of the explosion killed several men instantly, but the greatest loss of life was on account of the damps that followed the explosion immediately after the flash of flame. The concussion blew the doors off the ventilating shafts so that fresh air could not be circulated through the rooms. The helpless miners were suffocated wherever the foul air and smoke penetrated. Some of those killed by the shock were terribly mangled, one so horribly crushed as to be beyond recognition.

The men working on top were thinking of the nearness of the noon hour, when without warning there was a sudden and awful crumbling sound. The effect was like an earthquake and some of the men mistook it for that. The explosion sent timbers and debris flying from the shaft two hundred feet into the air and wrecked part of the shaft house. The guides for the cages were misplaced

and damage was also done to the fans that furished ventilation to the mine. Those on the surface knew that an explosion had occurred but its extent could not be conjectured.

Manager J. M. Timbrell was informed of the explosion and hurried to the shaft which was about three-quarters of a mile from the store. He took charge of affairs and called for volunteers. Some twenty men responded, pledged to take any reasonable chances to save the entombed men. The cages could not be operated, however, and the fans were out of commission. Two hours or more were required to make repairs, but the operation of the fans at full speed proved of little use until the ventilating doors in the mine could be replaced. It was nearly four o'clock in the afternoon before the rescue workers could enter the mine and remove the bodies.

The company store was converted into a morgue and thither the bodies were ordered by Coroner Foehlinger for identification and proper care and dressing before being exposed to the view of bereaved ones. The bodies were wrapped in blankets as they were brought from the mine, placed in wagons and carried to the store. There they were placed side by side in a long row that reached almost the entire length of the dismal building.

About half the men in the mine, those farthest from the explosion, escaped serious injury. But twenty were dead and fourteen badly burned, some of whom died later. According to the report of the State Mine Inspectors, the miners who lost their lives were John Bert, Sylvester C. Crayton, Charles S. Crews, George Denchok, John Elder, Daniel Fish, Russell Fish, Michael Fox, Jr., Michael Fox, Sr., Frank Gaspari, Joseph Gaspari, Alexander Gray, James Humphrey, Samuel Humphrey, John Kovall, John Martin, John Meneally, Andrew Pash, John C. Stovall, and David Walters.

Nearly all were married and left families "in poor circumstances". Several were immigrants whose wives could speak little or no English. Their anguish seemed especially harrowing because nobody could understand their frantic appeals. Two were Negroes. The seven Catholics were buried in the Catholic cemetery at Eddyville, while the other thirteen were interred in Forest Cemetery at Oskaloosa.

The disaster at the Lost Creek mine attracted much attention. Governor Cummins appointed a commission of operators and miners to make a thorough investigation. T. J. Phillips was elected chairman and Mine Inspector Verner, secretary. The commission inspected the mine on February

18th and listened to the testimony of witnesses. No evidence of negligence was found in the operation of the mine.

The cause of the explosion was faulty shot firing. The hole in room ten, close to an old one, should not have been charged a second time. According to the report, the side of this hole "was evidently shattered by the charge exploding in it the first time, and when the second charge was fired in the same hole, communication between it and the old hole was easily established, if it had not been established before, and through it and the fissures near it the flaming gases were projected into the room with great force and so intensely hot that the thin layer of coal adhering to the roof was blistered and burned. Along the right rib a considerable amount of soot and cooked dust furnished additional evidence of intense heat. It is undoubtedly true that the dust stirred up in this room by the firing of the shot and ignited by the flaming gases increased the initial force of the explosion considerably." It seems apparent that the flame "traveled close to the roof. Not a keg or vessel containing powder was exploded, although in several instances the stoppers had been removed, and several dinner pails found in low positions, having wooden handles painted and varnished, that would show the effects of fire,

while covered thickly with soot, showed no evidence of fire having touched them."

The State legislature in session at the capital took notice of the disaster. There ought to be a law, they declared, to insure greater care in shot firing. A bill was introduced at once, and on April 17, 1902, the shot examination law went into effect. It required that competent persons should be employed in all mines to inspect "all shots before they are charged" and to prohibit the charging and firing of any unsafe shot. To guide the shot examiners, the State Mine Inspectors described certain dangerous methods. First in the list was the cause of the Lost Creek disaster: "A hole which has blown the tamping must not be recharged and fired again." During the following year no lives were lost in Iowa coal mines on account of explosions.

From first place among Iowa coal-mining counties, Mahaska has gradually declined in importance. Nothing now remains of the once thriving mining camp at Lost Creek except a great heap of red shale and the grades where the railroad ran.

PHIL HOFFMANN

Union Grove

An immigrant casting about for a place of settlement upon an unclaimed piece of land made certain of two things. There must be a grove of trees for shelter and fuel, and there must be a spring to supply water. Thousands of settlers settled upon such "choice spots" in Iowa. In northwest Tama County certain early settlers found fertile land with timber and springs. Searching no further for a suitable name, they called their settlement Union Grove (adding Union for unity among the settlers), and gave to the township the name Spring Creek.

Nothing unusual, perhaps, marked the small community of Union Grove. Its historical significance lies in the typical lines of its development — in its pioneer ways of living, its interest in politics, its communal activities, its manner of amusement, and in its hopes for a greater future under the influence of such a powerful patron as the railroad. Its struggles and hopes, as well as its disappointments, were duplicated in many villages.

The settlement of Union Grove sprang up in the early eighteen fifties. Among those who founded the community were the families of

William C. Bywater, S. S. Mann, William Merrill, Emanuel Kuns, W. L. Conant, Stephen King and his sons, William and Orpheus, and the Bowen family.

After seventy-five years, I can still remember vividly the arrival of the Mann family in 1866. Viewed from our covered wagon, Mr. Merrill's home was of the type of prairie home that succeeded the sod house or log cabin. It was vertically boarded and battened. In this home, enacting the rôles of good neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Merrill planned that we, nine of us, be their guests until the covered wagon and some blanket tents could be improvised as "home" while the new house was being built. The hospitality of this pioneer home can not be forgotten. How Mother Merrill ever provided comfort for her own, and our large families, eighteen in all, is a secret known only to pioneer mothers of that time. And how I remember the big hot cornpone and butter she provided for our breakfast! And I recall further how embarrassed we were when half through eating, our host, just in from chores, sat up to the table and asked a blessing. Shamefaced we laid down our knives and forks, ceased wagging our jaws, and waited for the Amen.

Frontier activities prevailed indoors and outdoors. The Union Grove schoolhouse, often filled

to capacity regardless of the district limits, roads or weather, was the center of cultural and social activities outside of school hours. It was the gathering place for spelling schools, singing schools, Sunday schools, even church services; for literary society meetings, debates, Punch and Judy shows, and elections.

Other pastimes took forms less sedate. On home floors parties were frequent — "heel-and-toe-and away-we-go" with a lone fiddler in the corner energetically providing the rhythm. There was joy unconfined out on the prairies! The "heel-and-toe art" was best exemplified in the large spring and dairy house of W. B. King, or in the boweries of the Grove on Independence Day.

A little of the prankster spirit came west also. One frosty autumn evening a group of settlers planned a quail hunt in the Grove and drafted a newcomer to hold a gunny-sack open while the others scurried through the Grove beating the bushes to round up the quail. The birds did not turn in, however — and neither did the unsuspecting sack-holder until two o'clock in the morning.

In the search for wild game, sport was combined with fruitful occupation. Prairie chickens are said to have been shot or trapped by the wagon load and shipped to eastern markets. Wild

life had no protection by law at that time. One settler near the Grove obtained his year-round meat supply by shooting and dressing rabbits. He is known to have salted them down by the half-barrel full.

Union Grove, like most settlements, grew warm and serious over politics. When William B. King was twice elected to the State Senate to represent Tama and Benton counties, he went as a liberal Republican, though he had been a Jacksonian Democrat. "Yes," sarcastically commented an envious partisan, "that was when there were only Indians in the district to represent." At another election, S. S. Mann, school teacher, farmer, ordained minister, justice of the peace, gold miner, and wheelwright, dared as a Jeffersonian Democrat to be a candidate for the State legislature. Although he did not win the election, he materially reduced the usual Republican majority. In the days following the Civil War, this was considered no mean accomplishment.

Traveling in pioneer times was an undertaking, and transportation a problem. Some of the earliest settlers of Spring Creek Township went by foot to Dubuque to secure their claims at the United States land office. Others rode on horseback. William B. King habitually used a favorite saddle horse in supervising his large farm and

stock enterprises, or in directing the construction of roads and bridges. Mules and oxen were commonly used, but such means of travel were attended by weary hours and hardships on trips sixty miles to a flour mill or a general store. Wagons were often unloaded to lighten the pull through soft, muddy places and on uphill grades.

Union Grove's hopes as a community, however, rested upon the coming of a railroad. There were rumors of a track from Iuka (Tama City) through Deer Creek Valley to Union Grove. In fact the road was built as far as Toledo, but after a delay of several years, it was switched to the abandoned grade of a Toledo-Waterloo project. Finally it digressed to the new town of Gladbrook, several miles east of Union Grove.

Gladbrook's gain was Union Grove's loss, but Union Grove had already contributed its share to the life and settlement of the State.

T. E. MANN

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